

REMARKS

Method claim 1 (as amended in Amendment A) has been further amended to remove from the preamble the terminology "the steps of" to be consistent with the preamble of method claim 15. The system claims 19 to 21 have been cancelled in the interest of simplifying prosecution. Only method claims 1 to 4; 7 to 9; and 11 to 18 remain for examination. Of these, method claims 1 and 15 are the independent claims.

The rejections of the claims based upon Mastrorio et al. U.S. 5,849,014 and Marchosky U.S. 6,582,446 were addressed in Amendment A. The cited references, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest a method in which a substantially rigid surface is introduced adjacent an expandable device and along the longitudinal axis of the expandable device, as defined by amended claim 1. The cited references also do not teach or suggest a method in which a platform that extends from the distal end of an insertion device and along the longitudinal axis of the device, is positioned between an expandable device and a cancellous bone region, as defined by amended claim 15.

Reconsideration in view of the foregoing amendments and remarks is respectfully requested. Upon allowance of a generic claim, Applicant requests consideration of withdrawn claims 5, 6, and 10.

Respectfully Submitted,
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